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President: Mr. Holkeri ..... (Finland)

The meeting was called to order at 10.05 a.m.

Agenda item 10

Report of the Secretary-General on the work of the Organization (A/55/1)

The President: The General Assembly, in accordance with the decision taken at its 9th plenary meeting on 11 September 2000, will now take up agenda item 10, entitled "Report of the Secretary-General on the work of the Organization", to hear a presentation by the Secretary-General of his annual report.

I give the floor to the Secretary-General.

The Secretary-General: "The tumult and the shouting dies; the captains and the kings depart."

In other years this day, when the Assembly begins its general debate, marks the climax of the United Nations calendar. This year, coming the week after our historic Millennium Summit, it may seem something of an anticlimax.

But I prefer to see it as the moment when we roll up our sleeves and start putting into action the bold pledges that our heads of State or Government have made. It is in that spirit that I have the honour to present to the Assembly my annual report on the work of the Organization.

This year I have not tried to give my annual report any grand, overarching theme. I felt that the Assembly would neither need nor want that, since I had already set out, in my millennium report, what I see as the major challenges for humanity, and for this Organization, at the start of the new century.

Needless to say, I am delighted that many of the commitments and targets I suggested in that report were solemnly adopted by heads of State or Government in their Declaration last Friday.

Clearly, there is broad consensus on what needs to be done — broader than many would have expected in so large and diverse an Organization. What is vital now, however, is that we also agree on the means of doing it, and that we equip ourselves with the right tools.

In particular, it is vital that this Organization, the United Nations itself, should be capable of playing the role that the world's peoples expect of it. It must be, as the heads of State or Government declared, a more effective instrument for pursuing the priorities they have outlined. These are the fight for development, which is also the fight against poverty, ignorance and disease, including the worldwide scourge of HIV/AIDS; the fight against injustice in all its forms, from gross inequalities of power and wealth, through corruption, discrimination and oppression to the extremes of mass destruction or genocide; the fight against violence, terror and crime, which take on new forms as we develop new technology, and which regrettably march in step with the development of a global economy; and the fight against the degradation and destruction of our common home, the earth — a

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fight that still does not receive the priority attention that it merits, despite the constant accumulation of evidence that our present patterns of production and consumption are ecologically unsustainable.

I do not mean, of course, that this Organization should be able to win all these battles by itself. If the twentieth century has taught us anything, it is that large-scale, centralized government does not work. It does not work at the national level, and it is even less likely to work at the global level.

Governments can bring about change, not by acting alone but by working together with other actors — with commercial enterprises, and with civil society in its broadest sense.

Governments can define norms and principles, and plans of action, after carefully listening to the views of civil society. But then they need to work with appropriate partners to put those norms into practice.

Your heads of State or Government have reaffirmed the central position of this Assembly as the chief deliberative, policy-making and representative organ of the United Nations and have resolved to enable it to play that role effectively. It is up to you to give effect to that resolution, by taking decisions which reflect the will of the great majority of Member States, and taking them when they are needed.

Consensus is highly desirable, but it need not mean waiting for absolute unanimity on every sub-clause among 189 Member States. The minority, often a very small minority, should not withhold its consent unreasonably. Whatever we think of the veto in the Security Council, it surely has no place in this Assembly. We can no longer afford to operate always at the level of the lowest, and slowest, common denominator. It is up to you, likewise, to achieve the comprehensive reform of the Security Council that your heads of State or Government have called for — a reform that will make the Council more representative and legitimate, but also more effective.

In this connection, I draw your attention particularly to the request addressed to you by your heads of State or Government to consider expeditiously the recommendations of the Panel on United Nations Peace Operations. As you know, the Panel's recommendations are intended precisely to make this Organization more effective in its primary task of keeping the peace. Some of them fall within the area of responsibility of the Security Council, which decided, during its summit-level meeting last week, that it, too, would consider them expeditiously. Some fall fully within my own purview as Secretary-General, and I and my staff have already started work on implementing them.

But the largest number call for decisions by this Assembly, not least because they have budgetary implications. I will shortly submit to you an implementation plan, in the hope that within a year we will see real change. Never again must the United Nations find itself without the means to protect those who have been encouraged to put their trust in it.

Not only in peace operations, but also across the whole range of our activities, it is up to you to ensure that this Organization is provided, on a timely and predictable basis, with the resources it needs to carry out its mandates.

It is up to you to agree on the clear rules of procedure that will enable us in the Secretariat, by adopting the best management practices and technologies available, and by concentrating on the tasks that reflect your priorities, to make the best use of those resources.

I would add that it is up to you to allocate those resources in a way that reflects your current priorities, rather than condemning us to operate with a budget frozen in time.

Above all, we must make the best use of the Organization's human resources, the men and women whose job it is to implement your decisions. It is vital that we attract staff of the highest calibre and give them full opportunity to develop their talents. It is even more vital that we give them better protection when they are sent to serve the cause of humanity in situations of conflict and danger.

I shall shortly submit proposals to you for improvements in both these areas — human resources management and the safety of personnel. I trust you will act on them promptly.

(*spoke in French*)

It will also be up to you to see to it that the Organization is accommodated in premises worthy of it. Today, our Headquarters, a magnificent set of buildings whose elegant silhouette is known in every corner of the world, needs urgently to be renovated and

modernized. We cannot continue indefinitely to deal only with the most urgent needs, because this will be an increasingly expensive solution.

That is why I have proposed a master plan, in which I have considered several possible solutions and envisaged various ways of financing them. It emerges very clearly that major modernization works will cost a great deal of money, but it is also very clear that if we do nothing to change the situation, then the expense will soon become much greater, particularly in energy costs. I therefore call upon you urgently to take the necessary measures while there is still time.

Last, but definitely not least, it is largely up to you to ensure that parliamentarians, the private sector, non-governmental organizations and civil society in general have more opportunities to make their contributions to United Nations activities, to the fulfilment of its objectives and to the implementation of its programmes.

In this context, I am sure the Assembly will forgive me if I repeat here what I wrote in my *millennium report*. The agencies of civil society have made an important contribution to articulating and defending global norms.

(spoke in English)

Since I submitted the report, we have made headway on the specific proposals I made for new partnerships. We are bringing new information technologies within reach of more people in developing countries, and we are going to use those technologies to bring medical knowledge where it is most needed, and to ensure that help reaches the victims of disasters with a minimum of delay.

But we are not doing this alone. We are doing it in partnership with volunteers, with corporations and with philanthropic foundations. There is much, much more to be achieved through these and other kinds of partnership.

It is clear that the United Nations and the world's people have much to gain from opening the Organization further, including the work of this Assembly, to such a vital source of energy and expertise.

One role of the United Nations is to be the forum where international norms are agreed and promulgated, and where all voices can be heard, especially those of the poor and vulnerable, whose views and interests are often ignored elsewhere. Another role is to help form coalitions for change at the global level. And, of course, the United Nations must continue to play the primary role assigned to it by its founders: that of keeping the peace.

What sort of Organization can play these roles? One that is open, one that is flexible, one that is efficient, one that is representative of all the world's peoples and enjoys legitimacy in their eyes.

Those are the qualities which I have done my best to cultivate in this Organization since I became its Secretary-General. But, the key decisions lie in your hands.

The President: We have concluded this stage of our consideration of agenda item 10.

Agenda item 9

General debate

The President: The Assembly will now begin the general debate. Before giving the floor to the first speaker in the general debate, I should like to remind members of the decision taken by the General Assembly at its 9th plenary meeting on 11 September 2000, that congratulations should not be expressed inside the General Assembly Hall after the speech has been delivered.

In this connection, may I remind members of another decision taken by the Assembly at the same meeting: that speakers in the general debate, after delivering their statements, would leave the Assembly Hall through Room GA-200, located behind the podium before returning to their seats.

I should also like to remind representatives that, in accordance with the decision taken by the General Assembly at its 9th plenary meeting, the list of speakers will be closed on Thursday, 14 September, at 6 p.m. May I request delegations to be good enough to provide estimated speaking times that are as accurate as possible. This will facilitate the work of the General Assembly.

I should now like to recall for the attention of Members paragraph 21 of the annex to resolution 51/241, whereby the General Assembly indicated a *voluntary guideline of up to 20 minutes for each* statement in the general debate. Within this given time-

frame, I should like to appeal to speakers to deliver their statements at the normal speed so that interpretation may be provided properly.

The first speaker in the general debate is His Excellency Mr. Luiz Felipe Palmeira Lampreia, the Minister for Foreign Relations of Brazil. I give him the floor.

Mr. Lampreia (Brazil): Brazil applauds your election, Sir, to preside over the fifty-fifth session of the General Assembly of the United Nations. Your personal political experience and Finland's historic contribution to the promotion of peace, human rights and social development are valuable credentials that you bring to the honoured task of chairing our work.

On behalf of the Brazilian Government, I pay tribute to your predecessor, Foreign Minister Theo-Ben Gurirab. His diplomatic skills and commitments to the highest ideals of the United Nations insured him a decisive role at the helm of the fifty-fourth session.

I wish to make a very special reference to our Secretary-General, Kofi Annan. His moral authority has served as a beacon as we strive to fulfil the principles and goals of the United Nations. His report, "We the peoples: the role of the United Nations in the twenty-first century", is a contribution of fundamental importance to the cause of peace and justice, and to a stronger United Nations. It will serve as a permanent source of inspiration as we ponder the crucial decisions the Organization is called upon to make.

Brazil had the satisfaction to co-sponsor the resolution bringing Tuvalu into the United Nations family. We salute Tuvalu as our newest member.

For the sixth consecutive time it is my honour to take part in the opening of the general debate. On all previous occasions, I took stock both of the positive and negative aspects of the current state of world affairs, the facts that afford us satisfaction and those that are cause for frustration and even indignation. This is our daily challenge and the motivating force behind our work.

We meet here for the last time this century. We all know that the twentieth century has been marred by a fundamental contradiction. We have seen a growing abundance of intellectual and material resources that should have brought about a greater convergence of opportunities and expectations as well as of living standards throughout the world. Yet, what we also saw was a failure to harness the necessary political will to translate those extraordinary possibilities into a reality of progress shared by all. This applies not only to the international community as a whole but is equally valid for the great majority of nations represented here, among which is Brazil itself.

No doubt, we have much to gain in identifying those aspects of our relations with the international environment that are a hindrance to national development. Yet it is equally illuminating to seek within our own countries examples of success and failure that help explain the world we live in. Globalization is asymmetrical in part because it flows from national societies that are themselves socially unbalanced and seem to have lost some of their urge to bring about social justice.

Freedom — the greatest of values — continues to advance on all fronts and in all continents. That is a crucial development. There is cause for concern, however, that the core values of equality and fraternity are dangerously being put aside. It is imperative that these two other essential elements return to the top of our agenda. They must retake their rightful place at the centre of our policy decisions before it is too late — before some are misled into believing that the inevitable price for preserving freedom is the perpetuation of the divide between the rich and the poor, between those who are included and those who suffer exclusion, between the "globalized" and those left behind.

If democracy and freedom are to put down firm roots within our countries, we must foster a genuine sense of solidarity that translates into effective action. Only thus will we build an international order that is conducive to the preservation of peace and can function as an engine of sustained growth. It is unacceptable that major global issues and campaigns for transnational solidarity be manipulated and exploited in order to disguise what amounts to the protection of narrow interests. Unfortunately, this is what is happening in the field of international trade.

First, the inconsistency between free trade rhetoric and the continued use of protectionist policies of various types by developed countries. As I stated at the World Trade Organization conference in Seattle, the name of this game is discrimination. And discrimination, especially when waged against the weakest, is the absolute negation of solidarity. We must

reverse these grave distortions in international trade, and especially as concerns agricultural products.

It is inadmissible that the most prosperous nations, whose economies are strongly based in the manufacturing and service industries, should be legally entitled to restrict access to their markets for agricultural goods, while they call for the free flow of those goods in which they benefit from an enormous competitive advantage. It is even more intolerable that these countries be allowed, as is presently the case, to subsidize the production and export of agricultural commodities to the tune of dozens of billions of dollars. These policies cause enormous harm to exporting nations that are more efficient and competitive in this field, but lack the financial means to offer equally generous fiscal incentives to their farmers.

Secondly, not satisfied with the persistence of this highly discriminatory situation — where what is said often deviates from what is done — there are those in the developed countries who give voice to sectional interests and defend a new offensive against the exports of developing nations. This is what the new language of protectionism, camouflaged as humanitarian internationalism, would seem to suggest. It unfurls the seductive banner of labour and environmental standards, which, if adopted, would further restrict the access of products from developing countries to the markets of rich countries.

This rhetoric and its appeal to certain segments of public opinion might suggest that the exports of developing countries pose a threat to the economic well-being and the way of life of the more developed societies. We all know this is not true. After all, these exports represent less than a third of world trade and are made up mostly of raw materials.

The main objective of those who wish to introduce labour conditionalities into trade rules has little to do with improving the quality of life of workers in poor countries. Their fundamental aim is to protect backward sectors of their own economies that strictly speaking are no longer capable of competing effectively in a free trade environment.

Sanctions and commercial barriers are inadequate tools to enhance labour standards and to protect the environment in developing countries. Our countries and our own societies, more than any other, are interested in achieving those very same objectives, which is why we need more — not less — exports and economic growth.

This is a message that developing countries must make ring out in a clear and powerful voice. We must instil in developed societies an understanding that they are not alone in the world. Above all, they must not presume to unilaterally write the rules of international trade solely according to their interests and points of view, as if the other 5 billion human beings did not have equally legitimate aspirations to progress, justice and well-being.

Nations must come increasingly to comprehend and respect differing realities and objectives among themselves. At the same time, they must recognize their commonalities and affinities; explore and enlarge areas of convergence and opportunities for cooperation; and overcome suspicions, rivalries and disputes.

Nowadays it is above all through regional integration that this learning process takes place. For most countries, it opens the door to a more intensive and meaningful participation in global affairs.

In the Americas, and more specifically in Latin America, we have set ourselves firmly on this course. The countries of the region are increasingly integrated among themselves and into the world. These are the two inseparable faces of the same forward movement.

A few days ago in Brasilia, on the initiative of President Fernando Henrique Cardoso, a meeting of Presidents of South America took place for the first time in our history. This gathering sought to bring together the leaders of South America around the common challenges that grow out of our shared geography and physical proximity. It is only natural that this first meeting should have occurred in Brazil, which shares borders with nine of its 11 South American neighbours, and has lived in harmony with all for over a century in a spirit of peace, friendship and growing determination to move ahead on the road to full integration.

The Presidents took important and concrete steps in this direction that will bear lasting fruit. In the political realm, they agreed to underscore the commitment of the countries of South America to democracy and decided that participation in future South American gatherings would hinge on the preservation of the rule of law and full respect for democratic values and procedures. They also agreed to

hold consultations among their Governments in the event of a threat to democracy in our region.

In trade matters, they resolved to begin negotiations on a free-trade zone between MERCOSUR and the Andean Community, to be established before January 2002 and to be expanded into an economic zone covering all of South America, including Chile, Guyana and Suriname. To this end the Presidents decided to coordinate the planning and funding of projects for integrating the region's infrastructure, in particular in the priority areas of energy, transport and telecommunications. By working together in this way we will more quickly set up the physical links that will enhance South American unity.

Drug trafficking and organized crime are issues that affect, in different forms, all regions of the world. The Presidents highlighted the role of the Organization of American States in the fight against drugs in the hemisphere and the setting up last year of the multilateral evaluation mechanism to assess the performance of our countries in this effort. They also decided to establish systematic consultations among national agencies and to set up a South American anti-laundering task force.

The meeting of Presidents of South America was an event unique in the almost two centuries of independent nationhood for most of the subcontinent. As well as having historic significance and long-term impact, this summit will also generate results in the immediate future.

None is more significant than the commitment to democratic values. President Fernando Henrique Cardoso was very much to the point when he said:

> "the South America of today is synonymous with democracy ... In this dawning of democracy, we will not tolerate abuses. And we will increasingly demand the right not only to vote, but to defend freedom, access to information and the judicial guarantees that make elections an effective exercise in democracy".

The United Nations has seen important achievements over this last year. Let me recall a few. The goal of creating a more just, tolerant society was reaffirmed during the follow-up world conferences on women — Beijing +5 — and on social development — Copenhagen +5. At the Non-Proliferation Treaty review conference, modest but nevertheless significant progress was made towards freeing the world from the scourge of nuclear arms. As one of the New Agenda countries, Brazil is proud of its contribution to the success of the conference, whose results will be a litmus test for future advances in the nuclear disarmament field.

Efforts to establish an International Criminal Court have moved ahead, and Brazil signed the Rome Statute. Those that commit crimes against humanity must not, under any circumstances, go unpunished.

In the Brahimi report (A/55/305), a valuable framework has been laid out on how to strengthen the work of United Nations peacekeeping operations and, as a result, on how to overcome recent failures. The courageous Rwanda and Srebrenica reports offer us a precise diagnosis of what needs to be done.

In Timor, under the leadership of a model international official, Sergio Vieira de Mello, a new State is taking form and coming to life. We express our strongest condemnation of the attack on innocent workers at the United Nations office in Atambua, West Timor, who were helping to achieve this very goal.

In contrast with these achievements, the frustrations are well known. Peacekeeping operations in Sierra Leone and in the Democratic Republic of the Congo have still to show results; the conflict in Angola goes relentlessly on as a result of UNITA's inexcusable failure to comply with international directives and law, and there is growing awareness of the devastating dimensions of the AIDS epidemic in Africa and in the rest of the world.

Less than a week ago, in a historic meeting in this very Hall, world leaders took stock of the work and achievements of multilateralism. The outcome was a clearer reaffirmation of our determined and unequivocal commitment to reinvigorate the United Nations. We reinforced our convictions about the crucial role of this Organization in ensuring that justice is done and that international peace takes root.

Brazil has always been convinced of this.

In the absence of the United Nations, human rights would be more vulnerable; the distance between antagonists would be wider; the difficulties in eradicating poverty would be greater; the growth of tolerance would be slower and democratic practices would face even stronger opposition.

It may be that the Millennium Summit only gave expression to what we already knew. The historic legacy of this Summit should, then, be our renewed willingness to act.

We all know that it is by mobilizing political will that we can make a difference. The United Nations is the model political forum of the international community and its central goal is to provide the ways and means to bring to life our dearest ideals, values and aspirations.

In this hall there has often been a divorce between words and deeds, between objectives and the tools to achieve them, as if they hailed from different universes, distant and isolated from each other.

It is only through political dialogue, and consultation among States made possible by multilateralism that a degree of rationality and predictability can be brought to the workings of global forces.

To foster multilateralism is to strengthen the United Nations and the modern understanding of the individual as the central beneficiary of international action. Only thus can we look forward to progressive and just governance in this integrated world.

It is our obligation to fulfil our common commitments, so vigorously underscored during the Millennium Summit. We must do so with determination and a sense of urgency.

The President: I now call on Her Excellency Mrs. Madeleine Korbel Albrigh: the Secretary of State of the United States of America.

Mrs. Albright (United States of America): I am honoured to address the Assembly on behalf of the United States and to reinforce the eloquent message President Clinton conveyed during last week's Millennium Summit. Because my father worked here when I was young, I have always considered myself a child of the United Nations. And because I had the privilege to serve here as America's Permanent Representative, I feel at home and so will speak plainly.

The members of this body reflect virtually every culture, ethnicity and geographical region. We are city and country, inland and island, tropical and temperate, developing and industrialized. We are as diverse as humanity.

And yet, in responding to the daunting demands of this new era, we are bound together by the interests we share and the ideals to which we aspire.

We all have a stake in building peace and relieving poverty, championing development and curbing disease. We all want to see the dangers posed by weapons of mass destruction reduced, refugees cared for, children nourished, the environment protected, and the status of women advanced.

We all believe the benefits of globalization must be allocated more broadly within and among societies. Because if the new technologies are to ease the old problems, they must help the many who today lack access and skills, so that every village becomes a home to opportunity and every school a midwife to hope.

As the Millennium Summit reflected, we have no shortage of worthy goals. We are right to aim high and take on the mightiest tasks.

But as the Secretary-General has said, progress depends on working together. We need all hands on deck, pulling in the same direction. For each of us, that responsibility begins at home because the international community cannot help any nation that is not striving to help itself.

Each Government has an obligation to observe international norms on human rights, uphold the rule of law, fight corruption and raise awareness about HIV/AIDS. But in the twenty-first century, no nation can protect and serve its people simply by going it alone and that is why we all benefit from strengthening regional bodies such as the Organization of American States (OAS), the Organization of African Unity (OAU), the Association of South-East Asian Nations (ASEAN) and the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE).

Because of their unique expertise and regional legitimacy, they can be instruments for solving some of the hardest challenges we face. But they will succeed only if we raise our expectations of these organizations, call upon them to act boldly and back them when they do.

Regional bodies can contribute much to the purposes outlined in the Charter, and the goals established during the Millennium Summit. But here again, they cannot do it all.

The role of the United Nations is also vital, because no other institution combines a comprehensive mandate with near universal representation and global reach.

We all have an interest in the success of the United Nations. That is its greatest strength, and also its burden, because 189 nations have to work very hard if they are to agree.

I remember when I came to New York in 1993, I was told by cynics that the United Nations was too bureaucratic to change, and too big ever to achieve consensus on measures to improve its governance.

Those cynics were wrong. With support from many countries, we have made impressive progress.

Compared to seven years ago, the United Nations accomplishes more and wastes less. Accountability has increased and duplication diminished.

The Internal Oversight Office, which did not exist in 1993, has grown steadily more rigorous and is responsible for tens of millions of dollars of savings. A culture of transparency and results is slowly but surely taking hold. Moreover, both United Nations Headquarters and the entire United Nations system are better led than they have ever been.

United Nations leaders and Members can take pride in the gains made, but we all know there is much more work to be done.

That is why we must back the Secretary General's efforts to further improve United Nations management, recognizing that every dollar wasted is a dollar lost to the fight against poverty and to the achievement of other urgent goals.

We must also move ahead rapidly to strengthen peacekeeping, because it is the most visible and vital yardstick of United Nations success and, for people in strife-torn regions, often means the difference between a normal life and no life at all.

There is no magic formula for curing the ills that have plagued United Nations peace operations in the past. But the report, just prepared by Ambassador Brahimi's team, is a solid place to start.

As President Clinton said last week, we need to ensure that United Nations peacekeepers can be deployed with the right training and equipment and the right rules of engagement so they can achieve, not merely attempt, their missions.

This will require a larger peacekeeping staff, on permanent assignment, comprised of the best talent and experience we can find.

It will require military planners the world over to recognize that training for peace operations is a legitimate part of every nation's security strategy. It will require the ability to deploy rapidly not only United Nations military forces, but also civilian police and experts in law enforcement and judicial reform. It will demand improved coordination between military peacekeepers and civilian builders of peace, so that missions begun are completed and recovery bred by reconciliation can take hold.

And it will require additional resources from my Government and from each of yours. And by "additional", I mean resources that should not come at the expense of other core United Nations goals.

The United States will heed the Secretary-General's request that we work together to consider and implement the best recommendations of the Brahimi report.

Whether for peacekeeping or programmes, the United Nations also needs a sustainable and equitable system of financing. We do not have that today. Member States, including my own, must do a better job of making payments on time. But we must also look afresh at the method used to allocate responsibility for United Nations costs.

Last week, the Security Council called for adjustments in the scale of assessments. This plea has been echoed by dozens of other countries and should be acted upon by the General Assembly this fall.

A more equitable system should provide a much stronger foundation for United Nations programmes and missions. It should preserve the special responsibility for peacekeeping of the Security Council's permanent members. It should retain a heavily discounted rate for the poorest countries. And it should reduce the United Nations overall reliance on payments from the United States, while at the same time enabling my Government to write a check to the United Nations for nearly $600 million in prior obligations.

Clearly, adjustments are long overdue. The United Nations needs a firm and reliable financial base. In the weeks ahead, the United States will be pleased to work with members to accomplish this landmark goal.

Further improvements in management and peacekeeping and a sounder financial base are a vital step towards a stronger and more effective United Nations. But we must also stand up to the campaign launched by Baghdad against the United Nations authority and international law.

Security Council resolution 1284 (1999) provides an effective plan for protecting world security through resumed weapons inspections and monitoring inside Iraq. It has expanded the oil-for-food programme that has delivered $8 billion in humanitarian supplies to Iraqi civilians, with $6 billion more on the way. And it would enable Iraq, through compliance with the resolution's terms, to achieve an early suspension of sanctions. Thus far, Baghdad has flatly refused to accept the resolution. The regime's strategy is to ignore its United Nations Charter obligations and to seek to preserve at all costs its capacity to produce the deadliest weapons humanity has ever known.

We must continue to do all we can to ease the hardships faced by Iraq's people. But we must also defend the integrity of this institution, our security and international law.

The Millennium Summit illustrated the United Nations long-standing role as a forum for articulating consensus goals. But achieving these objectives will require action at all levels, from local to global. It will also require a willingness to move well beyond the limits and habits of the past.

Today, the United Nations is taking on a wide array of new issues, what I call "people issues", because they so directly affect the lives of our citizens. They include the challenge of protecting our planet by limiting greenhouse gas emissions; securing safe water supplies; halting desertification; and putting a stop to trafficking in human beings. They especially include the fight against HIV/AIDS, which was highlighted in a letter to the Secretary-General signed by the women Foreign Ministers last night. These and similar challenges are sure to be important components of twenty-first century diplomacy, and because they are global in scope, require a global response.

The United Nations is also playing an increased role in areas where cold war divisions once held it back. Over the past decade, United Nations entities have contributed much by prosecuting war criminals, promoting democracy, supporting human rights and aiding the fight against illegal drugs.

These issues require a willingness to take a stand, as the United Nations has done in holding accountable the perpetrators of ethnic cleansing in Rwanda and the Balkans; striving to end rebel outrages in Sierra Leone; and expressing opposition to the long-standing and ongoing violation of basic human rights in Burma.

Let me say this morning that when the Burmese Government tries to blame the victims for the crime, and say that Aung San Suu Kyi and her party are responsible for their own repression, I can only reply that much the same was once said about Gandhi and Martin Luther King, Nelson Mandela and Václav Havel. The world is not fooled, and we must not be silent.

Some argue that speaking out in defence of human rights constitutes interference in internal affairs. I believe it helps to fulfil the purposes of the United Nations Charter, because when international norms are assaulted, the United Nations must do more than simply observe injustice, or report upon it, or sympathize with the victims. We must do all we can, where we can, to stop the perpetrators.

This requires the active backing and participation of United Nations Members, so that respect for international law becomes steadily more universal and the incentives for observing global standards progressively more clear.

The result, if we are united and determined enough, will be a world of greater security, justice and peace. Realistically, this is essential, if we are to achieve the ambitious social goals we have set.

But there is one other essential element as well, and that is democracy. This past summer in Poland, for the first time, more than 100 nations came together to reaffirm democratic principles and ensure that the democratic tide remains a rising one around the world.

We did this not because democracy always produces good Governments, for it does not. But we are convinced by the evidence of the old century that the hopes we share for the new will more readily be

accomplished if people are able to live and work in freedom.

Democracy is the one road we can all walk down together and the best system yet devised for sowing and growing the seeds of economic opportunity.

In promoting democracy, we are not attempting to impose our values on anyone else. In fact, this is not possible, because democracy, by definition, enables citizens within a country to shape their own destinies in accordance with their own convictions and ideals.

Make no mistake. In any country, at any time, dictatorship is an imposition. Democracy is a choice.

As we have learned during the last 55 years, the United Nations provides no guarantees of global peace or prosperity. But it can play a vital role as catalyst and coordinator, and as a bridge connecting the contributions of one to another.

To those who would judge it harshly, I would respond not by pointing first to the deliberations of diplomats such as myself, in surroundings such as these. Instead, I would point to the day-to-day efforts of United Nations workers caring for refugees, feeding children, providing shelter and preventing disease.

I would point to the men and women on the front lines, from Port-au-Prince to Freetown, and from Kosovo to Kisangani, doing some of the world's hardest work, and, as we have been reminded by the recent slayings of employees of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees in East Timor, also the most dangerous. It is their efforts and sacrifice, in partnership with so many indigenous and other non-governmental organizations, that truly remind us of the United Nations purpose and of our kinship with one another.

This is, I expect, my last official speech to a United Nations audience. As I stand before you, I am deeply conscious not only of our many accomplishments, but also of the tasks not yet completed.

I am grieved by the conflicts that still rage, and the basic rights and freedoms still denied. I am frustrated by the gaps that still exist between our ideals and actions, and alarmed by the deepening material divide that ultimately threatens every nation, rich and poor alike.

There are those who say it is naïve to think that the future can be made better than the past. I am reminded that this institution was founded by men and women who were as realistic as any human beings could be, for they were the survivors of the worst conflict our world has known and determined that succeeding generations should be saved from holocaust and war. They had faith. Surely we, as well, must have faith that by working together within and outside this Organization, we can move together, step by step towards the lofty goals we have set, and thereby bring about a world more peaceful, prosperous and free than it has ever been. Since 1993, it has been my privilege to work with so many of you, from every part of the globe, in support of the interests we have in common and the dreams our people share.

This morning, I want to thank you for your friendship; pledge my cooperation in the months immediately ahead; and ask respectfully, in turn, for yours. I promise, as well, to serve the cause of international progress and individual liberty not only for as long as I am in office, but for as long as I am alive.

Address by Mr. Ismail Omar Guelleh, President of the Republic of Djibouti

The President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the President of the Republic of Djibouti.

Mr. Ismail Omar Guelleh, President of the Republic of Djibouti, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations the President of the Republic of Djibouti, His Excellency Mr. Ismail Omar Guelleh, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Guelleh *(spoke in French):* On behalf of the people of Djibouti, it is a great pleasure indeed to extend our sincere greetings to one and all at this Millennium Assembly. May I also, Mr. President, convey our congratulations on your election. Your vast and varied experience will serve the Assembly well.

I should also like to express our appreciation to your predecessor, Mr. Theo-Ben Gurirab of Namibia, for the excellent work done and the achievements registered. He showed great skill and commitment in his task. Clearly the accomplishments of the fifty-

fourth session were, to a large extent, due to his leadership, dedication and tireless efforts.

No organization, particularly one such as the United Nations, can survive for any length of time if beset, as it is, with mounting demands and dwindling resources, and without deft, tenacious and imaginative leadership. The trials and tribulations of the United Nations have continued unabated during the past year. It has had to restore peace and to tackle wars, conflicts, natural disasters and disease while also addressing development. The list of difficulties goes on. Yet the Secretary-General, Mr. Kofi Annan, has managed to strengthen the Organization and make it better suited to meet the demands of the times. Under his enlightened guidance, the United Nations continues to play a credible and meaningful international role. We are fortunate indeed.

This being the last General Assembly session of the decade, the century and indeed the millennium, it is the ideal time for us to reflect on the state of the world and of its peoples. There has been an all-pervading desire on the part of the United Nations and its Member States, to see fresh momentum in order to generate the necessary energy to deal with the new millennium and address critical issues. We have come to realize that the strength of our resolve and our determination to deal with the challenge of securing a better, safer and healthier world for its inhabitants will be decisive for the future of humankind. In many respects, however, it is still an open question.

It is perhaps a sign of the times when any overview of the world today must give prominence to the fact that the world is being ravaged by a disease, namely AIDS. This deadly epidemic is continuing to spread. We are all aware of its terrible toll, particularly in Africa, where it is decimating youth, the professional classes, the labour force and health-care systems. The will of the international community will be put to the test, and we will see how it responds in crisis situations.

Last year I noted that dialogue had been renewed between Palestine and Israel, which opened a promising opportunity for charting a new course in the Middle East. While it is true that the recent Camp David peace talks are still suspended, nonetheless a great deal was accomplished in terms of fully exploring the scope and diversity of the issues under consideration. There was at least a workable level of trust and a clear willingness to discuss the key "final status" issues of borders, settlements, water, refugees, statehood and, above all, the status of Jerusalem. It is difficult, however, to imagine any resolution or settlement that would not include Palestinian control of East Jerusalem. Israel's continued claim to the entire city, which would include control of Muslim holy sites in the Old City, adjoining Muslim and Christian quarters and selected Arab villages, would be counterproductive to peace.

Any mention of the Middle East must, of course, include a reference to the enormous loss suffered by Syria and the world at large with the death of the long-serving President of Syria, Hafez Al-Assad. We wish the new President, Bashar Al-Assad, all the best in his efforts to follow in the footsteps of his illustrious father.

In my address last year, I touched upon the spread and intensity of wars; rebel and splinter movements; and factional fighting in Africa. Sadly, while there have been some encouraging developments, a basic uncertainty remains. Fortunately, fighting between Djibouti's neighbours, Ethiopia and Eritrea, has ceased, and troop redeployment and the deployment of United Nations observers are expected to take place soon under the ceasefire arrived at under the auspices of the Organization of African Unity. The level of death and destruction in these hostilities simply defies the imagination, and the sight of so many civilians displaced from their homes and deprived of their livelihood, crowded into camps on both sides, is truly a disheartening experience. It is high time for the member countries of the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD) to opt for a comprehensive peace and cessation of hostilities in this subregion, in order collectively to focus on development and address the serious challenges posed by environmental disasters, such as the current looming drought.

As concerns other parts of Africa, the persisting conflict in Angola is still with us, although Government forces appear to be gaining the upper hand. Regarding the conflict in Sierra Leone, the sudden international concern to see that the belligerents are not allowed to sell the precious minerals of their country on the world market should, it is to be hoped, reduce their capacity to wage war. This may be particularly true for both these countries. We are pleased to see the measures being taken by the De Beers group and the Belgian authorities to close

international access to these bloodstained commodities. Similar action must be taken with respect to other commodities as well.

Undoubtedly, the most ominous threat to the continent at present lies in its centre, in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, where the ceasefire arranged last year has suffered a number of setbacks. The United Nations has been unable to deploy troops as envisaged. Talks between the Government and the opposition appear to have broken off, raising the dangerous spectre of a return to civil war, which could be disastrous for the entire continent. The distraught people of that nation deserve a respite from instability and insecurity in order to be able to enjoy normal lives.

In all these critical areas, be it the AIDS crisis, ever-growing poverty, wars, the environment, human rights abuses, weapons of mass destruction or lack of development, the United Nations remains the only Organization with the requisite experience and know-how to focus and refine the disparate efforts of humankind.

Decisions regarding the maintenance of international peace and security lie with the Security Council, which, with the explosion of United Nations membership over the last three decades, has become a not very representative body. If we are to restore confidence in its decisions, there has to be, at all costs, an expansion in its membership, both permanent and non-permanent, with the extension of permanent membership to both developed and non-developed countries. The Council should also have access to better information on unstable regions, and a rapid response capability. Furthermore, when serious humanitarian crises are unfolding, measures to limit the spread and impact of conflict should be taken on a selective, case-by-case basis, but across the board by all Members.

Like last year, I again intend to dwell on the problem of Somalia, and I again request the indulgence of the Assembly. At that time, Somalia was on the verge of total disintegration, following years of political paralysis. Urgent measures were needed to reverse this tragedy, a tragedy to which the international community had grown largely indifferent. The mood was simply one of waiting for the warlords to eliminate one another until a victor emerged with whom business could be done. In the meantime, those individuals carried out systematic dismantling, destruction and looting of the Somali nation, ignoring consistent calls to change their reckless and criminal behaviour.

This, however, cannot be tolerated any longer. The people have spoken at last. They have decided against endless uncertainty and aberration. They were sapped of their strength. The people have now opted for government, law and order, and a better future. We urge the international community, therefore, to respect the will of the Somali people, and to refuse to continue to cooperate with those destructive elements that made Somalia synonymous with chaos and violence.

Somalia as a nation, as an entity, seemed condemned to a slow death, unable to expect either regional or international intervention or a positive change in the behaviour of the warlords. Saving Somalia, therefore, necessitated moving away from the usual practice, which revolved around a few, familiar, self-anointed representatives of the people. Rather than provide them with yet another opportunity to play their game of deception, I suggested that it was time to move beyond them; time to empower the Somali people; time the Somali people assumed responsibility for their own destiny. There needed to be a conference of all the actors, the ultimate objective of which would be the re-establishment of peace, government, legitimacy and reconstruction. I believe that a true reconciliation of all segments of Somali society would tap into the popular mood of the Somali people, who overwhelmingly rejected the status quo. There was at last a burning desire for change; a change that would transform the lives of the people and would restore respect, dignity and integrity; one that meant peace, security and development. For the first time, there was an alternative in sight: not the power of the gun, but the power of the people.

The peace process was designed to embrace the whole country, including regions that enjoyed relative peace and stability. It was to be comprehensive, inclusive and transparent, excluding no individual, group, sector or region.

But beyond comprehensive reconciliation, the goal was to create a national framework leading to an administration that represented the people fairly, protected their basic rights and values and guaranteed liberty and justice for all. Somalia, after all, was a nation that had gone without a government during the longest period of State collapse in the modern era. It

was a country where the law of the gun, lust for power and vengeance dominated the landscape, until fear and ruthlessness had decimated every opportunity for peace. The predictable outcome was a social and institutional collapse without parallel in this century.

The key aspect of the Djibouti-led IGAD peace process was its bottom-up approach, which emphasized community participation in discussions, slowly consolidating the gains achieved. This process not only was cumbersome, slow, painful, frustrating and visibly fragile at times, but also endured international scepticism and indifference. All along, we insisted on the openness, independence and integrity of the process to enable the majority of unarmed Somalis, including elders, traditional and religious leaders, scholars, women, politicians, the youth and the civil society at large, to own the process. Accordingly, our efforts were directed towards safeguarding the conceptual framework and rejecting all conditional offers of assistance, material or otherwise, while always remaining open or receptive to ideas or proposals that deepened and enriched the process.

The conference itself represented the culmination of a series of consultations, meetings, symposiums and contacts that took place over the first six months of the year. Its objective was to overcome and resolve some of the most divisive and emotional national issues. The elaborate, extensive and admittedly costly preparations were necessary to heal the painful past and formulate sensible humanitarian and political guarantees and safeguards. Never again should there be toleration of the kind of hateful human rights violations and gross abuses of power that had destroyed the country.

While the process took time and went through several phases, it enabled delegates to address all aspects of Somalia's collapse, spurred by the strong desire for peace prevailing in the country.

The cornerstone of the process was the key role played by the traditional leaders, particularly in the achievement of the broadest possible reconciliation among the Somali clans. For long stretches of time, amounting to years, there had been virtually no contact between them, allowing each to pile up grievances throughout the conflict. Slowly and painfully, the conference persistently addressed complex political issues, while striving to overcome deep animosities and implacable attitudes.

The very critical first phase of the conference began on 2 May and concluded in early June. It was the most important phase, for we must bear in mind that more than 200 elders and traditional leaders from every part of the country were coming together for the first time — not the first time in 10 years, but the first time in the entire existence of Somalia as a State — seeking to overcome a decade of frustration, fear, anger, suspicion and mistrust, without ever having had contact with each other before. Slowly, this legacy of the past was overcome and replaced with a common purpose: the search for a new destiny and a sense of the need to act at all costs. Through the wisdom, persistence and sincerity of these elders, it was possible to complete the reconciliation and to establish solid structures for the second phase. The core political choices could then be made.

The second phase began on 15 June, with the participation of over 2,000 delegates. The setting of this conference bore no resemblance to any in the past, because this one took place in a giant tent. There were no class or social distinctions evident among the participants, who included women, representatives of all minorities, a number of warlords and, of course, the entire clan mosaic of Somalia. Proceedings were covered by satellite and on the Internet in order to enable Somalis everywhere in the world to keep abreast of developments. Participants outnumbered the residents in Arta, the hill-top resort town, which was the venue for the conference. Nearly every resident contributed to the conference one way or another, particularly in accommodating this huge and sudden influx of visitors.

This phase of the conference made it possible to address many issues, from civil strife, human rights, healing and reconciliation, the economy, the political structure, disarmament, transitional mechanisms such as the interim constitution, the legislation, the government and the judiciary system. Slowly, an irreversible momentum, a feeling of rebirth, took shape. In a real sense, it was Somalia's second independence, this time not from colonialism but from chaos and utter hopelessness.

After one month of intensive drafting and debate, an interim constitution, or charter, was adopted. It established the number of representatives, including a quota for women, in the new assembly and the modalities for their election. This major step in the process signalled the beginning of a truly nationwide

reconciliation effort, as it contained a series of accommodations, including a clan-based system as the political mechanism for power sharing during the three-year interim authority. The resulting transitional national authority could therefore be a highly workable vehicle for both the parties who are for the process and the troublemakers. No one, though, should take either the reconciliation process or the new institutions as shielding any individual from past misdeeds or war crimes. This is among the challenges that will confront future constitutional Governments of Somalia.

Let me say that 26 August 2000 is a date which will forever stir the hearts and spirits of Somalis. It was on this date that Somalia's interim parliament elected the country's first president in more than a decade. Starting with a field of 25 candidates, voting was completed after several rounds and more than ten hours of bargaining and negotiating in order to secure cross-clan support within the Assembly to win the necessary majority. Interest among Somali viewers for the conference and the elections was certainly heightened by up-to-the-minute radio and satellite coverage, which permitted Somalis everywhere to follow the elections and the debates that had preceded them since the beginning of the process.

The man chosen from among the candidates is here with us today. This man in the news is Abdikassim Salad Hassan, the new President of Somalia, a seasoned, urbane, and a highly experienced politician, who has already demonstrated his rare skills through a series of visits and engagements, both inside Somalia and externally. I wholeheartedly congratulate him and welcome him and his delegation most warmly in this Assembly.

What a joy to see Somalia retake its rightful place among the community of nations! The realization of having a president at last fills Somalis everywhere with emotional exuberance. People are dancing and singing in the streets in what was described as a spontaneous national holiday. We wish to express our deepest gratitude to the member States of IGAD and to Yemen who were represented at the highest level to witness the swearing-in ceremony of the new president; we are equally grateful to Saudi Arabia, France, Egypt, Libya, Italy, Kuwait, the Organization of African Unity (OAU), the League of Arab States and the United Nations for having sent high level delegations. And, of course, we wish to thank the entire diplomatic community in Djibouti for their presence and steadfast support.

Undoubtedly, we fully acknowledge the realism and genuine understanding so readily displayed throughout this process by the other immediate neighbours of Somalia, namely Kenya and Ethiopia. We have also received tremendous comfort from the continued encouragement and support from the Secretary-General and his able staff both in New York and in the region, particularly, from his Special Representative, Mr. David Stephen, and his staff, whose presence in the conference throughout the process proved remarkably beneficial. Equally, the unfailing commitment demonstrated by the Security Council throughout its series of statements since the launch of the initiative has been a source of constant comfort.

Obviously, the peace process invariably enjoyed full and unambiguous backing of IGAD, OAU, the League of Arab States, the Organization of the Islamic Conference and the European Union. We are deeply appreciative of their steady and principled stand. The Somali people will be forever grateful. Following the formation of the new Somali parliament, the Security Council reiterated that the preservation of the territorial integrity of the country was the precondition for overall normalization in Somalia and recommended that regional organizations work towards that end.

Some discordant voices have been raised questioning the acceptance of the new Government and its ability to return to Somalia. Some scoffed it would be a phantom government-in-exile, lacking legitimacy and resources. However, the triumphant return as well as the ecstatic welcome from the public of the new President-elect, Abdikassim, into Mogadishu, the centre of conflict, and the unprecedented show of support from all militiamen, including those allied to faction leaders, put the baseless stories to rest once and forever.

For those individuals who chose to oppose the creation of a representative and democratic Government, presumably because they are no longer at centre stage in Somalia, they need to come to terms with reality. A generous hand has been extended to all those people to join their peace-loving neighbours in supporting the talks, and now the Government. In fact, I personally invited and met with several of them in Djibouti for discussions in order to assure them there

was a place for everyone in the new Somalia under its proposed federal structure. Now, with a Government in place, the ball is in their court. We can only hope that they will make good use of the remaining opportunity for reconciliation and accommodation by placing the country first before their personal interests.

The rebirth of Somalia opens unlimited possibilities for Somalis throughout the world to rebuild their country. With the expected gradual return to normality in the country, the diaspora will have the incentive to invest in their homeland, bringing the capital and expertise needed to create employment opportunities for the youth.

It is to be hoped that the international community will mobilize emergency assistance for Somalia to enable the Government to lead the country, re-establish itself and re-create basic institutions and capacities. In the meantime, planning for medium- and long-term development must begin with the support of international financial institutions, the donor community, the United Nations and regional organizations.

Finally, let me state with all candour that for us in Djibouti this process has strained our meagre resources, but neither our resolve nor our faith. It has challenged our courage and perseverance, but our commitment has not wavered. Our people have made an exemplary effort and sacrifice.

May this endurance test of our people, and of the Somali people as well, serve as a source of inspiration and mark the beginning of what could be a major accomplishment for the Horn of Africa, and indeed for Africa and mankind as a whole.

The President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of the Republic of Djibouti for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Ismael Omar Guelleh, President of the Republic of Djibouti, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Agenda item 9 (*continued*)

General debate

Address by Mr. Juan Francisco Reyes López, Vice-President of the Republic of Guatemala

The President: The Assembly will now hear a statement by Mr. Juan Francisco Reyes López, Vice-President of the Republic of Guatemala.

Mr. Juan Francisco Reyes López, Vice-President of the Republic of Guatemala, was escorted to the rostrum.

The President: I have great pleasure in welcoming the Vice-President of the Republic of Guatemala, His Excellency Mr. Juan Francisco Reyes López, and inviting him to address the General Assembly.

Mr. López (Guatemala) (*spoke in Spanish*): Less than a week ago, in this same Hall, the President of the Republic of Guatemala, Alfonso Portillo Cabrera, addressed the Millennium Summit. On that occasion the President underscored our commitment to the purposes, principles and values of the Charter of the United Nations, and presented a summary of our view of the role of this universal Organization in the twenty-first century. In closing, he stated:

> "In the course of the general debate that will begin in the General Assembly next week, we will elaborate further on this vision and how it is reflected in the efforts we are making domestically." (*A/55/PV.3*)

Ms. Rodrigues (Mozambique), Vice-President, took the Chair.

I am honoured and pleased to deliver what our President promised.

I shall address two issues: first, our Government programme and the implementation of the peace agreements, and secondly, our position vis-à-vis some of the items on the agenda for this session. Before doing so, I wish to pay tribute to the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Namibia, Mr. Theo-Ben Gurirab, for his vigorous conduct of the last session, and particularly for his resolute work in the preparation for the Millennium Summit. We are pleased that Guatemala had an opportunity to cooperate in this undertaking.

I also wish to congratulate the President very warmly on his election to preside over our debates. I have no doubt that his recognized diplomatic and political experience will enable us to obtain the best results.

I begin with a few words on the peace process in my country, to which the United Nations has made such a significant contribution. December 1996 saw the signing, following a protracted period of arduous negotiations of Agreements that brought to an end four decades of a fratricidal war that had tragic and lasting consequences. Our political party was not a signatory. However, during the electoral campaign it affirmed, that it accepted the Agreements as a State commitment, and President Portillo confirmed that in the speech he made on taking office. Similarly, our Government is fully committed to complying with the provisions of the Agreements, and indeed to extend their scope to incorporate new matters, such as democratizing access to credit.

We value highly the presence in our country of the United Nations Verification Mission in Guatemala, and request the Assembly's cooperation for the extension, in due course, of its mandate until the end of 2003.

It is important to note that the purpose of the Peace Agreements coincides with our own Government programme in many areas, such as unrestricted respect for human rights; consolidation of a full, participatory democracy; subordination of the armed forces to the civil power; development of a multi-ethnic, multicultural and multilingual society; strengthening and modernization of the justice system; reform of the State; and, above all, an adequate response to the unsatisfied demands of the majority of Guatemalans for more and better social services, adequate incomes, better-paid jobs and equality of opportunity. In other words, the Peace Agreements constitute a suitable frame of reference for the programme of our Government, which aims not only to fulfil, but to improve on them.

Our economic and social programmes for the period 2000-2004 fit within this frame of reference, as does the political covenant, which seeks to increase the participation of all sections of civil society in the public policy decision-making process. These programmes also seek to reconcile the difficult economic situation that we face with our commitment to carry forward a vigorous process of economic expansion for the benefit of all Guatemalans — above all, the neediest. We are, in other words, grappling with the classic dilemma of having to meet the requirements of a macroeconomic adjustment while coping with the imperative need to reactivate the economy.

At the centre of the national debate about how to overcome this dilemma is a process of intersectoral accommodation that we call the "fiscal covenant", which aims to fulfil one of the commitments in the Peace Agreements, namely, raising the tax take in Guatemala by 50 per cent between 1995 and 2000.

The arduous and lengthy negotiations that have been conducted in this connection are about to come to fruition with the adoption of a set of measures which, once the commitment has been honoured — admittedly, a couple of years late — will provide financial support for implementing the other undertakings laid down in the Peace Agreements.

We intend to establish the necessary bases so that in the period 2001-2004 we may secure dynamic growth of the economy, with the resulting generation of decent, gainful productive employment together with higher levels of savings and investment.

We shall invest in the future by according priority to the work force, particularly in the areas of health and education, including multilingual education.

We shall carry out new productive activities in those areas where we feel that we have comparative advantages to offer at the international level.

We shall stimulate the institutional environment necessary to facilitate the efficient functioning of the market through competition without privileges and the competitiveness of enterprises, all within the framework of absolute respect for labour law.

We shall devote special attention to combating poverty, by decentralizing the public administration and working closely with those who are to be the target of our policies.

Now turning to our international relations, and bearing in mind those issues dealt with at the Millennium Summit, I wish to mention the significant advance achieved in the process as we seek to resolve our historic dispute with Belize. With full regard for the principles of peaceful settlement of disputes between or among States, we have reached a new stage whereby dialogue has been chosen as the means to settle differences. On 31 August, within the framework of the regional body to which both States belong, namely the Organization of American States (OAS), a body of facilitators, appointed by each party, has been set up. The facilitators enjoy full independence in the performance of their duties. Their chief aim is to work

out and propose courses of action to advance the legal resolution of the dispute. These are significant steps towards creating a peaceful environment, the adoption of confidence-building measures and a future-oriented or forward-looking outlook.

Similarly, we ratify, our deep commitment to supporting Central American integration, as well as our commitment to the rest of Latin America and the Caribbean. Our Government has taken important initiatives in the area of regional and subregional integration. Evidence of this is the tripartite declaration adopted last May by Guatemala, El Salvador and Nicaragua in order to give fresh impetus to Central American integration.

The question of migrations is also an important branch of our international relations, one where Guatemala bases its policy on the principle that whatever the legal status of migrants may be, they are human beings fully entitled to rights under the law and, as such, capable of invoking the full range of human rights. Evidence of this is the fact that during his visit to the United Nations in connection with the Millennium Summit, the President of the Republic, signed the International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of their Families. The best way to discourage migration is to create sources of employment in the countries of origin. The industrial countries, therefore, must dismantle all kinds of barriers so that developing countries are enabled to export commodities and not people.

I should now like briefly to explain our thinking on those main items that will be discussed in the Assembly at its fifty-fifth regular session.

First, I wish to restate our full backing for the United Nations, as expressed by President Portillo last week, since the Organization is the highest embodiment of multilateralism. We are persuaded that the Organization will have a crucial role to play in the twenty-first century. I attest to the tangible contribution that the United Nations has recently made in my country as regards both the consolidation of peace and in cooperation for development through the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and United Nations agencies.

Secondly, we also wish to observe that it is necessary to adapt the Organization to the exigencies of globalization and to this post-cold war era. It is up to us, as member Governments, to promote this adaptation in various spheres such as intergovernmental bodies, efficiency and effectiveness of the Secretariat, the setting of priorities in the programme of activities and the financial strengthening of the Organization.

Of the pending reforms, the one which has received most attention is the Security Council. Can there be any doubt that its membership or its methods of work must reflect the prevailing circumstances of a contemporary world? There is no need to be frustrated at the lack of progress in prior sessions of the General Assembly in connection with the reform of the Security Council. We appreciate that there are differing viewpoints in this regard and, of course, differences tend to stalemate or paralyse action. But this should not prevent us from redoubling our efforts to make this absolutely vital organ of the United Nations more effective, more representative of the Members of the Organization as a whole and more transparent in the way it operates. To achieve those ends we advocate, among other things, expansion of the membership of the Council as well as an exercise of the veto in strict conformity with the Charter. We feel that, at any rate, regular use should be subject to review by the General Assembly and, in extreme instances, by the International Court of Justice in the interests of a genuine rule of law of an international character, thus avoiding abuses.

Thirdly, we are convinced that we need to strengthen our collective capacity to prevent and settle conflicts, both across borders and domestically. We believe that the recently submitted report by the Panel on United Nations peacekeeping operations offers an excellent point of departure for this purpose. Our only preliminary observation on the matter is that strengthening the United Nations capacity in this area should not be carried out at the expense of our economic and social activities. Rather, should we decide to implement the recommendations of the Group of Experts, then the time will have come to put an end to an ill-conceived policy of zero growth of the United Nations budget. As President Portillo stated:

> "If we want the United Nations to be a first class institution, we must learn to provide it with the necessary financial support." (*A/55/PV.3*)

This brings me to a fourth point that has gained considerable prominence in the agenda for this session.

I refer to the controversial question of revising the scale of assessments both for the regular budget and for the peacekeeping counterpart. Our position is very straightforward. We agree that the relative situation of many countries has developed over the years and this warrants a revision of the way in which we share the burden of financially maintaining the United Nations. At the same time, however, we feel that the most important criterion for fixing the scale of assessments is ability to pay. The relative participation of countries in the gross domestic product of the world continues to provide a basic yardstick. There is also justification for weighting this yardstick on the basis of certain special considerations, such as, for instance, recognition of the special situation of the least-developed countries on the one hand, and, on the other, of the special responsibility that should be assumed by the permanent members of the Security Council for maintaining peace.

In fifth place, as regards general disarmament, we emphasize the need to advance towards total elimination of nuclear, chemical and bacteriological weapons; illicit trafficking in small arms; and the use of anti-personnel mines and explosive devices. In respect of these matters we strongly support all practical action being undertaken by the United Nations to achieve these aims as well as those designed to establish nuclear-weapon-free zones in all parts of the world.

In the sixth place, we offer our full support for and active participation in the main events scheduled in the coming years. Among them, I wish to single out the high-level intergovernmental event on financing for development and the World Conference on Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Intolerance.

In the seventh place, in an increasingly interdependent world, multilateral diplomacy has a crucial role to play in the struggle against environmental degradation. As Guatemala is a party to the main global environmental treaties, we reaffirm our commitment to the maintenance of ecological balance.

Finally, we feel the United Nations should continue to concern itself with what we have called the great unfinished task of the twentieth century: eradicating world poverty. Together with the multilateral financial institutions, our Organization should play a crucial role in ensuring that the benefits of globalization are widely shared by all countries. This calls for action at the level of each country, but also at the international level.

Similarly, by way of general comment, we wish to reiterate, before this Assembly, that Guatemala, in its very flesh, has experienced fratricidal confrontation. That is why Guatemala has the moral authority to insist, before God and man, that peace reign among all the peoples of the world, particularly between the separated brothers of China and Taiwan. We therefore appeal for the continuation of talks in order to achieve an outcome that will fulfil the aspirations of the Chinese people on both sides of the Strait, reached through peaceful, free and democratic means.

Likewise, we trust that a prompt solution to the Middle East conflict will be found and that situations of tension in the African continent and other parts of Europe will be overcome, as well as among any other fraternal people of the world who are victims of violence and discord.

I wish to conclude my statement by expressing a personal conviction. I am persuaded that all human beings are equal in the eyes of the Almighty, without distinction as to race, language or creed. I trust that in that same spirit we shall be able to beginning from this session to give effect to the guidelines enshrined in the Millennium Declaration adopted last week.

The Acting President: I now call on His Excellency Mr. Hubert Vedrine, Minister for Foreign Affairs of France, speaking on behalf of the European Union.

Mr. Vedrine (France) (*spoke in French*): I have the honour of speaking this year on behalf of the European Union, which France is presiding over until the end of December.

In this capacity, it is a great pleasure for me to congratulate the President on his election. It symbolizes the respect the international community has both for his country and for himself.

I would also like to thank your predecessor, Mr. Theo-Ben Gurirab, for his skill in guiding the proceedings of the fifty-fourth session of the General Assembly, Mr. Sam Nujoma and Ms. Tarja Halonen for their work with you, Mr. President, as Co-Chairpersons of the Millennium Summit.

I would like to commend the Secretary-General of the Organization, Mr. Kofi Annan. His international action, his independence and his vision have made a decisive contribution to asserting the key role the United Nations plays and must continue to play. The European Union wishes to assure him of its support for his work and for the Organization and its representatives.

The Millennium Summit, an unprecedented gathering of 155 heads of State and Government, allowed us to address the main challenges facing the world community and the role of the United Nations in the twenty-first century, which will begin on 1 January 2001.

The Union notes with great satisfaction that the Summit produced a political document setting forth a road-map for the Organization for the years to come. These guidelines are based on ideas outlined in the Secretary-General's report. It is now up to the General Assembly to implement them. The Union will contribute actively to this.

Peacekeeping, strengthening international security and defending human rights are the central principles underpinning the European Union's foreign policy. Recent crises on Europe's very doorstep have convinced us that we cannot remain idle when these fundamental principles are violated. In this regard, the European Union approves of the priority given to peacekeeping during last week's meetings. Mr. Brahimi's report offers an in-depth analysis on this subject. It presents useful recommendations for the mandates of peacekeeping operations, operational planning in New York and deployment. It presents a unique opportunity to strengthen the United Nations capacity for peace operations. The European Union will actively participate in considering these recommendations.

The Union has decided to equip itself to be a major political actor and to play its full role on the international stage. To this end, and within a very short time-frame, it has undertaken decisive measures. New decision-making, action-oriented political and military bodies have been set up: a political and security committee, a military committee, a European Union military staff, a situation centre and a committee for civilian crisis management. These bodies will enable the European Union to intervene quickly and credibly in the management of international crises.

The European Union has also announced its intention to establish by 2003 a force of 60,000 troops for international missions involving the whole range of conflict-prevention and crisis-management operations, with the requisite air and naval support for deployment within 60 days for a period of at least one year. This autumn there will be a conference for the commitment of capability at which each Member State shall pledge its contribution to this joint endeavour.

The Union has also set ambitious and realistic targets for developing collective capabilities. In addition to its military resources, it will develop civilian intervention capabilities, including a corps of civilian police, whose contribution to peacekeeping is invaluable. In this connection, Member States have set themselves the goal of being able, by 2003, to provide up to 5,000 police officers, 1,000 of whom will be deployment-ready within 30 days.

These decisions now enable the European Union to complement its already sizeable economic and humanitarian programmes with the full range of resources required for crisis management. Of course, these activities are designed in full respect for the principles of the United Nations Charter. Now more than ever, it is vital to establish working ties with the United Nations. To initiate this cooperation, the European Union troika will discuss this issue for the first time with the Secretary-General. On behalf of the European Union, I hereby invite Mr. Kofi Annan to go to Brussels for a working meeting with the organs of the Union.

The European Union hails the considerable efforts and determination shown by the President of the Palestinian Authority and the Israeli Prime Minister during recent negotiations to reach a final agreement between the Israeli and Palestinian peoples. We welcome in particular the renewed vigour with which very sensitive issues have been addressed at this time.

We commend President Clinton and the Secretary of State for their unflagging efforts to facilitate negotiations. Circumstances favourable to reconciling positions continue to exist. We urge the parties to seize this historic opportunity, show courage in decisive choices, take fully into account human realities and the recognized rights of all, and thereby achieve a final agreement.

The European Union welcomes Israel's withdrawal from the zone it occupied in southern

Lebanon. It welcomes the redeployment of the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon and the presence of a joint security force, sent to the area by the Lebanese Government. It urges all parties to fulfil their responsibilities in order to defuse tensions. The European Union believes that only a comprehensive settlement encompassing every track of the peace process, including the Israeli-Syrian track, is likely to guarantee lasting stability in the region. It will continue to support the efforts of the parties to this end and contribute to the implementation of any agreements that may be reached.

Turning to Europe, the situation in the western Balkans is a matter of serious concern to the entire international community. Ten years of conflict have ravaged the region, leading to severe human suffering and to politically unstable and therefore dangerous situations. But beyond accumulated hardships and the lagging economic and social development of many of those countries, all of the peoples and nearly all of the leaders of the region have realized that it does have a future, and that future is Europe. Today, all Europeans now share the belief that these countries are bound one day to join the European Union.

This is why the European Council has reiterated that its goal is to firmly attach the countries of the region to Europe. This means the greatest possible integration into the political, economic and social currents of Europe through the stabilization and association process, political dialogue, trade liberalization, the harmonization of their laws with those of the European Union, and cooperation in justice and domestic affairs.

The assistance provided by the European Union to countries of the region over the last 10 years — nearly 8 billion euros — is considerable. The European Union will continue to sustain this stabilization and association process by providing the western Balkan countries with massive technical, economic and financial assistance and by granting them asymmetrical trade advantages in farming and industry very soon, which will pave the way for the creation of a free trade zone with the European Union. In the context of elections concerning almost the entire region, we will encourage them to develop regional cooperation and to continue to make determined efforts for political, economic and social reform in order to consolidate democracy and human rights, to build the rule of law and lay the groundwork for sustainable development. In this context, the European Union has reaffirmed its determination to continue to be the driving force in the Stability Pact for South-eastern Europe, which represents a new vision of cooperation between the countries of the region and the international community.

The summit to be held shortly in Croatia of the European Union and the Western Balkan countries — on the basis of a French proposal — will signal our common resolve to overcome the divisions of the past.

The Federal Republic of Yugoslavia will not be able to participate in the conference, as the nature of its present regime does not allow it to do so. But the Serbs know that they have their place in the European family and that the European Union is looking forward to the day when the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia is in a position to participate fully in the stabilization and association process and to recover its rightful place in Europe. The elections to be held on 24 September could be decisive in this respect.

In Kosovo the international community, acting on the basis of Security Council resolution 1244 (1999), has achieved praiseworthy results. Thanks must be given to all those who have made this possible in spite of enormous difficulties, especially the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, the United Nations staff and the Kosovo Force soldiers, the many international organizations there on the ground and the non-governmental organizations. The first democratic municipal elections in Kosovo, to be held in a few weeks' time, will constitute a major step in the implementation of resolution 1244 (1999). I would forcefully reiterate that the international community will not allow unacceptable acts of violence, whatever their motivation, to cause the democratic electoral process under way to fail. We will not let extremists from whatever faction sabotage the work accomplished over the past year under the auspices of the United Nations.

The European Union considers the status quo in Cyprus unacceptable, and it supports the efforts of the Secretary-General to reach a negotiated, comprehensive, fair and lasting settlement consistent with relevant Security Council resolutions. It reiterates its commitment to stability and prosperity throughout the Mediterranean region. With talks beginning right here under the auspices of the Secretary-General, it

invites the parties concerned to enter into substantive talks.

The European Union is equally determined in its support for efforts to prevent and settle conflicts in Africa, in close cooperation with the United Nations, the Organization of African Unity (OAU) and other subregional organizations and in accordance with the objectives agreed at the Africa-Europe Summit, held last April in Cairo under the Portuguese presidency of the European Union. It will lend its backing to the measures taken jointly by the OAU and the United Nations to implement the peace settlement between Ethiopia and Eritrea. In supporting the deployment of international observers, the European Union is also willing to lend its support to the establishment and demarcation of borders, to demining and to assistance to refugees and displaced persons. It is endeavouring to provide assistance to the war-stricken populations of both countries, whose immense suffering has been compounded by drought.

The European Union is deeply concerned by the developments in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. It calls on all parties to the Lusaka Agreement to implement their commitments, including those made at Kampala. This will allow for progress with respect to the military and political provisions, all of which are under threat due to the continued fighting and the deadlock in preparing for a national dialogue. It also urges them to abide by the relevant Security Council resolutions, in particular resolution 1304 (2000), which calls for an orderly withdrawal of foreign forces from Congolese territory and for the cooperation of all parties in the deployment of the United Nations Organization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUC) through the lifting of restrictions on the freedom of movement of MONUC personnel and by ensuring their security.

The illegal exploitation of the natural resources of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, a violation of the country's sovereignty, is also unacceptable. The European Union therefore commends the establishment by the Secretary-General on 15 August last of a group of experts in charge of analysing ties between the illegal exploitation of those riches and the continuation of the conflict.

We are pleased to note greater awareness about the illicit trade in diamonds and other minerals, which directly fuels conflicts. This is the case in particular with the illicit trade in diamonds in Angola, whereby UNITA has been funding its war effort. We underscore the importance of complying with Security Council resolutions on this matter. We welcome the decision to place this important question on the General Assembly's agenda. The discussion should be based on the Kimberley process. It should reflect the work of the preparatory conference co-chaired by the United Kingdom and Russia. Lastly, it should examine the proposal made at Miyazaki to establish a standing group of independent experts to formulate ways of preventing illicit trade.

The European Union reiterates its support for resolution 1306 (2000) on Sierra Leone, which tightened existing arms sanctions and established an embargo on raw diamonds illegally exported from Sierra Leone. The European Union calls on all the parties to the conflict to comply with the principles and objectives of the Lomé Agreement and to be fully involved in the re-establishment of peace and stability and compliance with human rights in Sierra Leone.

The European Union and its member States will continue to contribute to African capacity and means of action in conflict prevention and resolution, in particular through support for the OAU and subregional organizations and initiatives.

The European Union is deeply concerned at the situation in Myanmar. It asks the Myanmar authorities to immediately restore Ms. Aung San Suu Kyi's freedom of speech, movement and communication with the outside. It is urgent for dialogue to begin between the Myanmar authorities and the democratic opposition, including the National League for Democracy and national minorities. The Union supports the Secretary-General's Special Envoy for Burma, Mr. Razali, in his efforts to find a solution.

The European Union expresses its solidarity with the people of East Timor and commends the work done by the United Nations Transitional Administration in East Timor (UNTAET) in close cooperation with the political authorities of East Timor. It is in favour of accelerating reconstruction assistance in order to guarantee a successful transition and avoid any delay in the timetable leading to independence.

We are extremely concerned by the instability caused by the militias in both East and West Timor. The new outbreaks of violence by them have taken the lives of two "blue beret" peacekeepers and, more

recently, of three personnel of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR). The European Union calls on the Indonesian authorities to adopt effective measures to control the militias without delay.

The European Union also calls for the termination of terrorist activity in Kashmir, the implementation of confidence- and security-building measures and strict respect for the line of control in order to restore a peaceful local climate and enable the dialogue between Pakistan and India to resume in the spirit of the Lahore Declaration. The European Union will be looking closely for such signs from the parties involved and will encourage initiatives likely to resolve all the disputes between the two countries.

It is important for the specific measures laid down in Security Council resolution 1172 (1998) to be implemented and for Pakistan and India to subscribe to the international non-proliferation regime and sign the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty.

Having advocated direct dialogue between the two Koreas for many years, the European Union welcomes the historic inter-Korean Summit that took place in Pyongyang from 13-15 June this year. This is an important step on the road to reconciliation between the Republic of Korea and the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, opening bright prospects for strengthening the stability of the region. We invite the two countries, who have been members of the United Nations since 1991, to continue this process in order to help the Korean people heal the wounds of the past.

On the subject of Haiti, the European Union recalls that full respect for the constitutional provisions concerning the elections and electoral legislation currently in force is the basis of democracy and the rule of law.

The threat of proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and their delivery systems is a crucial issue that the European Union — which shares the concern for international peace and security that ought to inspire the nations represented here — is resolved to combat relentlessly. To this end, international cooperation must be stressed, along with the development of multilateral standards for non-proliferation, arms control and disarmament.

This is particularly true of chemical and biological weapons, which have now been banned. The Union is working towards the early conclusion of a protocol containing reliable and effective verification measures to strengthen the 1972 Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production and Stockpiling of Bacteriological (Biological) and Toxin Weapons and on their Destruction. We are equally determined to ensure nuclear non-proliferation and disarmament, where so much progress has been made since the signing of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT), to which 187 States are now parties.

Since the end of the cold war, effective instruments for ending the arms race and achieving disarmament have begun to see the light of day, with the halt to testing, the treaty enshrining it, the first two START agreements to reduce the largest nuclear arsenals and a host of unilateral decisions following the same trend. Our priority must be to consolidate this mechanism. A start was made with the Review Conferences of 1995 and 2000; the results, which we welcome, must be fully implemented.

We must give full weight to strengthening the safeguards of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) through the widespread implementation of the measures contained in the 1997 Model Protocol and to remain alert to the issue of NPT compliance. We must also revive the momentum of the multilateral negotiations.

The entry into force of the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty, the completion of the operational readiness of the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty Organization (CTBTO) and the negotiation at the Disarmament Conference of a fissile material cut-off treaty are all necessary steps that are of concern and ought to mobilize all States, be they parties to the NPT or not. The start of this negotiation implies urgent negotiations on a working programme in the Conference on Disarmament. International standards in this field can only be effective if they are universal. Arsenal reductions, which are the prime responsibility of the nuclear-weapon States, must also be continued. This will enable us to move closer to our common objectives — namely, the elimination of nuclear weapons and general, comprehensive disarmament under strict and effective international control.

The issue of small arms and light weapons is just as sensitive in many regions of the world. It deserves special attention. The 15 European Union members

will contribute to the preparation of the United Nations Conference on the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects, which will take place during the summer of 2001, with the objective of obtaining a positive and enforceable plan of action to combat the destabilizing accumulation and spread of small arms and light weapons. At the same time, the Union shall continue its drive for the implementation of the Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-Personnel Mines and on their Destruction. It will join in the efforts to achieve the total elimination of anti-personnel mines.

On the very important subject of human rights, the European Union will continue to support the efforts of the United Nations to reach the goal set by the Secretary-General to put human rights at the heart of every aspect of its work. The best guarantee of solid progress in this area is each person's awareness of the importance of human rights and democracy and the emergence of groups who actively promote them in every country. In this connection, the European Union welcomes the designation, thanks to the support of many countries, of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Human Rights Defenders, Ms. Jilani; we welcome her appointment and assure her of our full backing as she undertakes her duties.

This year the United Nations has once again demonstrated that it is the main forum of progress in setting standards for human rights, as witnessed by the adoption of two optional protocols to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the sexual exploitation of children and on children in armed conflicts. This represents a major step forward in favour of the protection of children. The European Union intends to contribute actively to the special session of the United Nations General Assembly for the follow-up to the World Children's Summit, to be held next year, which will give the international community yet another opportunity to help this cause move forward.

Another important task, the World Conference Against Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Intolerance, lies ahead. At the European Preparatory Conference, to be held in October under the auspices of the Council of Europe in Strasbourg, the European Union will demonstrate its commitment to combat all expressions of racism, whatever form they take. The Union, all of whose members have abolished the death penalty, calls on States that have not yet done so to adopt a moratorium as a first step towards the eventual abolition of this punishment, which is contrary to human dignity.

The European Union will endeavour to strengthen international cooperation in the fight against terrorism and will play an active role in the negotiations to be held to that end. It earnestly hopes that this General Assembly will adopt the Convention Against Transnational Organized Crime and its Protocols at the Palermo Conference next December. Given that such crime, that one of its most odious manifestations is the trafficking in human beings, and that it poses an ever-growing threat to our societies, it is vital for the international community to develop the means to cooperate and fight against it effectively.

Lastly, the European Union looks forward to the early establishment of the International Criminal Court. I would like to recall that ratification by 42 States is still needed for this.

By way of conclusion, I would like to stress one last point, and that is sustainable development. The European Union's contribution to international cooperation is substantial. With 30 per cent of the global gross domestic product, the Union contributes 36 per cent of the United Nations regular budget and 39 per cent of the peacekeeping budget. As you know, it also contributes the rather large amount of around 55 per cent of the world total of official development assistance. We are pleased with everything that was said last week on this extremely important matter, and we will continue our exemplary work on sustainable development. Indeed, we believe that development is one of the key ways of resolving all of the problems facing us throughout the world, as outlined in my statement, and the European Union wishes to express its strong, continuing commitment to that end.

The Acting President: I give the floor to His Excellency the Honourable Chakra Prasad Bastola, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Nepal.

Mr. Bastola (Nepal): I join previous speakers in congratulating the President on his well-deserved election to preside over this Millennium Assembly. I am confident that, with his wisdom and consummate diplomatic skill, he will steer the Assembly to a successful conclusion.

Let me also express our appreciation to Mr. Theo-Ben Gurirab, Foreign Minister of Namibia, for his

exemplary leadership as president of the General Assembly at its fifty-fourth session, especially in the run-up to the Summit. Secretary-General Kofi Annan also deserves our unqualified tribute for his innovative leadership to prepare the United Nations for greater challenges ahead.

Nepal wholeheartedly welcomes Tuvalu as the newest member of the United Nations family. We congratulate the people and Government of that Pacific island country on this happy occasion of joining the world body as an independent nation.

Last week the heads of State and Government assembled in this Hall of the people to ponder measures to address the challenges of the twenty-first century, and reaffirmed their faith in the United Nations as the central instrument for promoting peace, prosperity and justice. The vision given us by the Summit's Millennium Declaration will be a guide for the global community, and particularly for the United Nations, in the days ahead. Nepal welcomes the Declaration and pledges its commitment to implement it with the utmost seriousness.

My Prime Minister, addressing the Summit, expressed the view that the future will judge us by the ability of our leadership to make a difference in people's lives. We in Nepal expect the global community to work in cooperation and solidarity, in a true spirit of partnership, to change for the better the destiny of every man, woman and child around the world.

As we enter a new century and a new millennium, the world is replete with paradoxes. It now has fewer inter-State wars, but numerous civil wars. Science and technology have made unprecedented advances, but diseases like AIDS still defy treatment. More people enjoy democracy and freedom, but terrorism still draws youth. The walls of frontiers are crumbling in the globalized economy, but the assertion of cultural identity has increased. The United Nations has to work in the midst of these paradoxes.

The United Nations has succeeded remarkably in bringing peace in some situations and failed in others. Its involvement has eased tensions in the Central African Republic and Tajikistan. East Timor is heading into independence in relative calm. Kosovo is engaged in building democratic institutions. Israel has withdrawn its forces from southern Lebanon, a withdrawal which has vastly improved the prospects of a comprehensive peace in the Middle East.

Still durable peace remains as elusive as ever. In essence, it entails a culture of peace founded on disarmament and the peaceful resolution of conflicts, as well as on measures that remove the root causes of conflict — poverty and exclusion.

Lasting peace cannot be secured until nuclear weapons, which constitute the major threat to global security, are eliminated in a time-bound manner. Nor can it be achieved without the complete eradication of other weapons of mass destruction. We consider that weapons delivery systems and the so-called national missile defence systems threaten the peace as well.

Small arms and light weapons have killed more people than all weapons of mass destruction combined. We must turn our backs on the guns by controlling small arms and light weapons. In this context, we welcome the proposed conference on small arms to be held in 2001.

Conflicts disturb Africa, Asia, Europe and Latin America. The Middle East is yet to conclude the final settlement and be at peace with itself. The Balkans are still rife with dispute, though of a lesser extent now. South Asia is in the perennial pain of low intensity war. Terrorists are on the prowl in many places, exploiting the fragility of States. As a result, thousands of innocent lives have been lost. The action of the Security Council, which is the world's sentry, has been too little, too late in many situations; it has let emerging disputes descend into full-blown conflicts. Nepal urges the Security Council to act in a timely manner, promptly, decisively and adequately to prevent conflagrations.

Nepal has always been an active participant in United Nations peace operations. Nepalese peacekeepers have served with impeccable professionalism and dedication and have earned a name for themselves. Many valiant Nepalese Blue Helmets have laid down their lives in the service of world peace. The recent death of Private Devi Ram Jaishi, a Nepalese peacekeeper, while defending peace in East Timor, rekindles our commitment to abiding peace, wherein no one needs to lose a father, husband or son to violence.

As host to the United Nations Regional Centre for Peace and Disarmament in Asia and the Pacific, Nepal

is strongly committed to enhancing the Centre's contribution to peace and disarmament, and is fully prepared to meet its obligation to house the Centre in Kathmandu.

The report (A/55/305) of the panel on the United Nations peace operations provides a wealth of ideas to put peacekeeping on a sound footing and to improve peace and security in the world. My delegation agrees with the tenor of the report, and will be willing to examine it in greater detail as it comes up for closer scrutiny.

A survey of the present trouble spots on earth would lead us to one unmistakable conclusion: most conflicts have poverty and exclusion at their root. All too often, we tend to treat the symptoms, not the cause. Nepal strongly believes that a durable peace will continue to elude us as long as we do not eliminate dehumanizing poverty and deprivation. Prime Minister Koirala aptly described at the Summit the vicious circle of poverty and conflict, and asked the world community to redouble its efforts to reduce poverty in search of peace. That deserves serious consideration.

Today more than one fifth of humanity lives on less than a dollar a day. Poverty, illiteracy and diseases are rife in the poor countries. Unemployment among youth is rampant. A growing population finds itself scrambling over shrinking resources in a stagnant economy, which has been the case in most developing countries. The AIDS pandemic has become a major scourge of the developing world, particularly in Africa. Unscrupulous leaders, often for narrow political gains, fish in the troubled waters and incite violence, which shatters the fragile economy further, making the next cycle of violence inevitable and even more deadly.

If we are ever to achieve lasting peace, we must reduce poverty and build peace from there. We subscribe to the targets, suggested by the Secretary-General in his report (A/54/2000), and adopted by the Summit, to reduce poverty and promote development in the developing countries. World conferences, one after another, have concluded that this is the only way forward. A series of their mid-term reviews has reaffirmed this conclusion; yet, sadly, nothing much has changed.

In global forums, both North and South have agreed to work together for accelerated growth and development in the South, to open the markets in the rich countries to the products of the poor countries and to improve access of the developing countries to technology in the advanced countries; to relieve the poor countries of their debt obligations; and to promote social development and human rights. The global commitments are forgotten before the ink on them dries. We must narrow the gap between what we say and what we do.

Most advanced countries have, for instance, sorely lagged in meeting their pledges of development assistance. More aid now means no need for it later. Nepal commends those rich countries that have met the aid targets, and urges others to do so. It is disturbing that the United Nations funds and programmes, which are the main sources of unconditional assistance, have been facing a decline in their resource base; we call on the global community to replenish their fungible resources.

Although global trade has increased several times in the last few years, the developing countries — especially, the least developed ones — are losing ground as their share in world trade diminishes, due mainly to the declining terms of trade for them. Globalization has gained momentum as people, trade and services move across borders at an exceptional speed. And information technology has opened a whole new vista of communication, including e-commerce. Much as both of these phenomena have potential benefits for all, they have benefited some more than others, widening the disparity between the rich and the poor. We believe that the wealthy countries, together with the World Trade Organization, must work towards more equitable and rule-based trade to narrow the income gaps, promote equitable globalization and bridge the digital divide.

Countries in the South are sinking under the unbearable burden of foreign debt. While we appreciate the Heavily Indebted Poor Countries Debt (HIPC) Initiative of the rich countries, we also urge them to expedite its implementation and expand its scope to cover all the least developed countries and other countries in serious difficulties, not of their own making.

Foreign direct investment has become a motor of growth for a few, but the vast majority of developing countries remain untouched by this new phenomenon. Understandably, markets drive investors in their investment decisions, yet Nepal believes that our development partners can encourage investors, through

a vigorous guarantee and incentive scheme, to invest in those countries that have yet to see much foreign direct investment.

The unsustainable patterns of production and consumption in the rich countries, together with the population pressure in the poor countries, have taken a high toll of the environment, the common human heritage. The global agreements to promote sustainable development and to reduce greenhouse gases remain largely unfulfilled. As for Nepal, we have taken measures to preserve the environment through establishing norms, reducing pollutants, extending the forest coverage and building the green component into development projects. We are also studying the Kyoto Protocol with a view to becoming a party to it.

The least developed countries, particularly the land-locked ones like Nepal, are confronted with the most formidable challenges of development. Over the years poverty in these countries has increased and their share of world trade has sharply declined. In Nepal, for instance, more than 50 per cent of the people are illiterate and live below the poverty line. Lack of access to the sea not only makes transportation difficult for us, but also deprives us of sea-based resources. These disadvantaged countries therefore need special measures to overcome their development constraints, including better transportation facilities for the land-locked countries so that they can reduce poverty and join the global economic mainstream. We believe that the conference on the least developed countries to be held in Brussels next year will open up a new vista of cooperation for their development.

Nepal hopes that the high-level event on financing for development next year will find reliable means for funding development in the developing world. It must energize both North-South and South-South cooperation to fulfil shared objectives.

As a functioning democracy, Nepal is committed to human rights and good governance. We have a Government that is accountable to people and pledged to serve them best. As democracy, development and human rights reinforce each other, we strive to promote them together so that people have the opportunity to realize their full potential. Nepal is a party to most human rights instruments, and we hold the view that civil and political rights are as important as economic, [illegible]. Therefore we oppose any selective use of human rights values to suit vested political interests.

I also wish to report to the Assembly that Nepal has recently freed the remaining few thousand bonded labourers and established the National Human Rights Commission. During the Summit we also signed the optional protocols to the Convention on the Rights of the Child, protocols on the sale of children and on children in armed conflicts.

Today more than 22 million people have taken refuge outside the country of their origin, and millions are displaced within — sometimes because of natural calamities, but very often because of their Governments or because of terrorists. Nepal itself has nearly 100,000 refugees from Bhutan, their presence has created economic, social and environmental problems for us. Nepal believes that both State and non-State actors must respect the human rights of the weak and vulnerable, including those of women and children.

The security of small States has remained a perennial concern for us. During the cold war the fear was of being trampled in the super-Power rivalry; in the post-cold-war era the fear is that small States will be economically, militarily or politically bullied if they act in a manner that incurs the wrath of the stronger States. It is saddening that even the United Nations is forced frequently to acquiesce to the designs of the powerful. We urge the international community to uphold the rule of law and the rich and powerful countries to respect the right of small States to sovereign independence, something they zealously guard themselves.

Whenever there are problems anywhere on the length and breadth of the planet, the United Nations is called on to inspire and act, without necessarily being giving the requisite resources. Since there is no alternative to the United Nations, we must revitalize and reinforce it through comprehensive reforms so that it can rise to the challenges of changing times. It is imperative to restore the primacy of the General Assembly, which is the closest thing to a world parliament, so as to bring the will of the peoples to bear on vital global policies.

The Security Council reform process has dragged on for quite a while. Although there is no quick fix, nor

composition, more transparent in function and more capable of keeping peace. The Security Council, by doing too little too late, has often proved part of the problem, rather than of the solution. We must change it.

Now that the recent Summit has recognized poverty and social exclusion as the principal cause of conflict, it is critical that we focus our attention on reinforcing the Economic and Social Council on a par with the Security Council on economic matters. We must work towards making the Economic and Social Council capable of coordinating the funds and programmes within the United Nations and with the Bretton Woods institutions, the World Trade Organization and other outside bodies.

Nepal applauds the Secretary-General for the silent and continuous revolution at the United Nations in search of economy and excellence. Indeed, there is a constant need to regenerate and reinvent the world body to attune it to the emerging challenges in a changing world.

Sadly, the United Nations has to limp from one year to the next as some of the key contributors fail to live up to their treaty obligations. We believe that the cardinal principle for apportioning financial obligation should be the capacity to pay, based on one's share of world gross national product, with special responsibility on the part of the permanent members of the Security Council in peacekeeping budgets. It is morally indefensible to make the poorer countries subsidize the richer countries to keep the United Nations and its peacekeeping activities going. We call on all Member States to pay their dues in full, on time and without conditions.

South Asia has one fifth of the world's people, but lacks recognition and clout commensurate with its size and potential. The only way for it to gain the place it deserves is through regional cooperation. Yet we in the region have not been able to work closely and cohesively for the greater good of our peoples. The South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation is virtually at a standstill. Nepal urges all fellow South Asian countries to work collectively for the shared prosperity of our peoples. Time will not be kind to us if we fail to seize the opportunity.

The Acting President: I now call on His

Mr. Borg (Malta): I would like to join the other delegations here in congratulating you, Mr. President, on your election as President of the General Assembly. May I also pay tribute to your predecessor, Mr. Theo-Ben Gurirab, who, through his experience and diplomatic skills, guided the fifty-fourth session to a successful conclusion. I wish to express our appreciation to the Secretary-General, under whose guidance and with whose expertise the Organization has been moving ahead in the attainment of its goals. May I also extend a warm welcome to Tuvalu, the newest Member of the United Nations. For many years Malta and Tuvalu have cooperated as joint members of the Commonwealth.

This is an auspicious occasion, not merely because the General Assembly is the most widely representative group of the world's peoples, but also since it comes at a time when we are poised on the edge of a new dawn, a new beginning. Only last week we saw and heard the heads of State or Government of countries the world over reaffirm their faith in the Organization and its Charter as indispensable foundations of a more peaceful, prosperous and just world. It was a renewed commitment to make the United Nations a more effective instrument in the hands of the world's people. This is a weighty undertaking, and one which may well benefit from a re-examination of the experience acquired during the past 55 years of the United Nations existence.

As we are all no doubt aware, the United Nations has been instrumental in fostering a culture of partnership among States. Indeed, we meet here today in the understanding that this culture of partnership must continue to constitute the basis for humanity's progress. This is more than just a vision for the future; it is the road map for the way forward based on a programme of action that has weathered the vicissitudes of time and withstood test after test ever since its adoption in San Francisco over half a century ago. It is a noble endeavour that has survived in the face of adversity, that has experienced occasional setbacks, but that has also registered more than a fair share of success.

Aided by its long-standing commitment to dialogue, the United Nations has positively contributed to the process of decolonization that has so decisively transformed the political map of the world. It has

ranging from health care to food supplies, from literacy to urban development, from historical heritage to the natural environment, and, more recently, improving the status of women.

Nevertheless, in the crucial area of the maintenance of peace and security — the very *raison d'être* for the creation of the United Nations — the Organization, for various reasons, has at times been unable to fulfil this mandate. This is reflected in the painfully honest reports of the Organization's failings in Rwanda and Srebrenica. These negative experiences provided the backdrop to the recently published Brahimi report.

The Government of Malta shares the concerns expressed in this report, which cautions in particular against entrusting the United Nations Secretariat with unrealistic mandates while not providing it with commensurate resources. We look forward to early consultations on the manner in which the recommendations of the report may be pursued.

We have given serious consideration to addressing these concerns and have decided to match them with a specific commitment. It was in this connection that my Prime Minister last week, in his address to the Millennium Summit, signalled Malta's intention to significantly increase its peacekeeping contribution through a voluntary move from group C to group B.

It will be recalled that over the years Malta has made other contributions towards promoting the global objectives of the United Nations. These have included a number of initiatives not designed in the narrow national interest but in the interest of the international community as a whole.

May I recall in this connection Malta's proposals to the General Assembly relating to the seabed and the ocean floor, which led to the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea, to the question of the ageing and to the initiative relating to climate change. These initiatives alerted the United Nations to examine the far-reaching, serious implications of those issues and thereby enabled it to adopt timely measures, which, as can be appreciated, have helped defuse, and continue to defuse, potential political tensions, environmental dangers and social complications.

The progress recorded in the United Nations over the years is impressive and a source of great satisfaction to my Government. The goals achieved, while relevant the world over, lie extremely close to the heart of the area of which Malta forms part. The Mediterranean can be seen as a microcosm of the larger world stage. We have faced, and continue to face, intermittent conflicts and wide gaps in development levels. The shortage of freshwater resources in some areas is potentially another serious challenge. Despite being a sea of promise and great opportunity, the Mediterranean continues to challenge our political will to nurture long-lasting stability. Security in the Mediterranean requires committed and quiet determination to identify both the problems and, more importantly, the solutions. The element of dialogue that has so often underscored the work of the United Nations has brought much to the enhancement of relations between the States of that part of the world. Malta indeed not only shares the aspirations of the United Nations in this regard, but has striven throughout the years to ensure that they become an integral part of all dealings in the Mediterranean.

Together with the rest of the world community, Malta welcomes the progress made in the Middle East peace process. We hope that the same determination as helped overcome seemingly insurmountable obstacles in the past will continue to inspire the protagonists to work for the goal of a just and permanent peace and security for our Middle Eastern neighbours.

The Balkans are another part of the Mediterranean area that also continues to challenge the will of the international community in its quest for stability and its determination to ensure that full respect for human rights becomes the common heritage of all peoples who live there. In this respect, every positive development is of the utmost importance.

For over 25 years the situation in Cyprus has remained a cause of concern. We therefore earnestly hope that an early settlement of the Cyprus question will be found. In this connection, the Maltese Government reiterates its full support for the Secretary-General's efforts to find a solution on the basis of the relevant Security Council resolutions.

The Mediterranean has also been witness to the cruel and merciless trafficking in human beings, a tragic and criminal exploitation of the misery of others. We welcome the initiatives taken by the Italian Government at the Conference for Development and Security in the Adriatic and the Ionian held in Ancona

last May. The broad parameters established in that Conference can indeed serve as a prototype for similar agreements elsewhere.

Malta has always been acutely aware of the role it can play in bridging the divides of this complex area. Successive Maltese Governments have consistently promoted efforts to develop and consolidate cooperation between the littoral States of the Mediterranean at both a bilateral and multilateral level.

In the mid-1970s we hosted the preparatory meeting that led to the Barcelona Convention that launched the Mediterranean Action Plan. In 1995 we argued in favour of a Mediterranean stability pact for the region, a proposal which is now taking shape in the form of a Euro-Mediterranean charter for peace and stability. In 1997, at a time of difficult political circumstances for the area, Malta hosted the second Euro-Mediterranean Ministerial Conference, following that of Barcelona in 1995. More recently, Malta was one of the prime movers behind a recommendation within the Conference on Security Co-operation in the Mediterranean process of the Inter-Parliamentary Union for the establishment of a Parliamentary Assembly of Mediterranean States. These initiatives serve to underscore our commitment to the achievement of peace, prosperity and a just solution to the demands of the Mediterranean people.

We believe, however, that on our own we can only do so much, and that therefore the principle of multilateralism, as enshrined in last week's Declaration, must be fully respected and observed. As was stated in the final Declaration of the Millennium Summit, the management of economic and social development, as well as the risks and threats to international peace and security, must be a shared responsibility. Freedom, equality, solidarity, tolerance and respect for the natural environment are goals towards which our combined energies and efforts should be channelled.

It is for these reasons that we have chosen to pursue the path of membership of the European Union. It is the common values and principles that inspired the birth of what is today the European Union that inspire us in our quest. This is because it is through membership that we feel we can best play our part on the international stage, and contribute more effectively towards the promotion of peace and progress in the Mediterranean. We feel that our capabilities to play a useful role may be greatly enhanced from within the European Union. This is not solely for our own local benefit. We believe that our membership will give the European Union an added dimension that will serve to benefit both the northern and southern shores of the Mediterranean littoral.

Good governance is what we, the peoples of the United Nations, seek at a national, regional and international level. Yet good governance is exactly what is threatened by a number of phenomena that plague our contemporary society. Ranging from the trafficking of drugs to that of armaments and human beings, international organized crime threatens the very texture of law and order through abuse, corruption and violence. The growth of related crimes also alerts us to the need for ever closer international cooperation.

As much as the socio-political environment requires constant vigilance, so too does the physical environment. Global warming remains a constant concern, and we urge that the undertakings to ward off the further degradation of the ozone layer be fully adhered to.

Questions of disarmament, extreme poverty, the striking proportions of HIV and AIDS and the vulnerability of the disabled, infirm and those discriminated against on the basis of race or religion remain ever present on the world agenda. At no time must we lose sight of these very real issues faced by a huge proportion of the world's people. We must, in pursuit of a more caring and equitable society, seek to understand and subsequently meet the needs of these vulnerable members of society. It is not sufficient to promote global e-commerce and ever new economic world orders if we do not also tackle the root causes of many of the problems in the developing world. We need to convert these enormous challenges into moments of opportunity. We need to harness the positive forces of globalization, the new knowledge-based economy and the opportunities of trade to bridge the divides that persist throughout each and every continent.

The United Nations has taken a leading role in promoting international understanding and agreement in relation to these varied and diverse areas. Indeed, a wide spectrum of activities, international agreements and agencies of the United Nations have been put to good use in the creation of the impetus necessary for change. We must continue in our endeavours to bring

people to a common understanding of how this can best be consolidated, not solely through dialogue, but through concrete actions that must necessarily follow.

The number and variety of tasks that face the United Nations are by no means small. Malta is, however, convinced that the United Nations is the forum best positioned to provide workable options and long-term solutions to the problems that plague the world and man's relations with it. Last week's Millennium Summit clearly demonstrated the international community's renewed commitment to this unique and indispensable Organization and its vital role in the maintenance of peace and stability, the eradication of poverty, ignorance and disease and the protection of the global environment.

If the Millennium Summit charted our course towards making the United Nations a more effective instrument in the hands of the world's peoples, then the Millennium Assembly must come to be remembered as the point in time when the first major decisions were taken to place the Organization firmly on this chosen path. I hope that these will not be merely empty declarations of intent, but that each Government and each of us here present today will endeavour to better our corner of the globe as best we can. My Government remains determined to play its part.

The meeting rose at 1 p.m.